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THE ANCIENT LANDMARKS

ADDRESS TO THE GRADUATING CLASS

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The Ancient Landmarks

I confess that I approach this occasion with no little temerity, for I have a keen sense of my lack of fitness to meet such an obligation and to take full advantage of so notable an opportunity.

You young ladies are going out into the world to enter into a new life—a life of amazing freedom and liberty of thought and action. You will enter into a new environment. You will frequently hear comparisons drawn between conditions and social customs of to-day and those of twenty years ago. It is true that conditions and modes of life and living have undergone a tremendous change, but I am in no wise convinced that these changes are not hazardous to the moral and spiritual welfare of this present generation.

While conditions are daily changing, fundamentals have not changed. The truths of two thousand years ago, of two generations ago, are as fundamental and immutable to-day as they were when our Lord delivered the tablet of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai; and, whatever be your environment in the future, you can't ignore, without courting disaster, the old landmarks.

In Proverbs, 22nd chapter, 28th verse, we read:

"Remove not the ancient landmarks which thy fathers have set."

A little further on in Proverbs, 23rd chapter, 10th verse, we read again:

"Remove not the old landmarks and enter not into the fields of the faithless."

Just here, I would like to tell you a little story that will make clear to you my thought. Some months ago, I found it necessary to establish certain land lines between some property that I own in Rabun County, where I have my country home, and that of my neighbors. I engaged the County Surveyor of Rabun County to come to my place and under-

take to establish these lines. They were not the old land lines of the survey of 1806; many of these had been changed because of the extensive hydroelectric developments up there by the Georgia Railway and Power Company. These great storage lakes had obliterated many of the old landmarks and caused the necessity of changing many of the old established land lines. You know in the rural districts there is no subject quite so "touchy" as land lines. Our rural courts are choked with lawsuits involving disputes between neighbors over property lines, and a great deal of bloodshed has been caused by these disputes. I have known of instances where thousands of dollars have been spent, fighting over some insignificant amount of property because neighbors had fallen out over just where the dividing lines should run.

When we started out that morning, my friend, the surveyor, asked me where the line was located between my property and that of my neighbor, Mr. Hopkins. I told him I didn't know; that was what I had him down here for. "Well," he says, "we have to establish a corner." He looked up some of his old notes and surveys and we found that the particular corner from which he wanted to start had been submerged by Lake Rabun and was then under more than sixty feet of water, naturally making it unavailable. Neither Mr. Hopkins nor I knew exactly where the dividing line between us was located.

He thought for a minute, picked up his instrument and started off through the woods. I asked him where he was going. He pointed to a distant mountain and said, "Up on the side of that hill, I think I can locate an established corner that was set up there when the State Survey was made 120 years ago." We all went over there and began to search. Finally, on the side of a very steep place, I stumbled on to a pile of stones that the storms and rains and winds of more than a century had almost obliterated, long since forgotten, covered with leaves and over-run by briars.

I called to Mr. Henderson, the surveyor. He came up to where I was standing and began to scratch around in the leaves, uncovered the stones and finally we found a portion of a rotting stake which, however, still contained some surveyor's marks which he could interpret. It had originally

been driven into the ground and the stones piled around it, but had rotted off. We then began to search for some "bench marks" which are used by surveyors in marking a corner. We found some faint evidences of these. He set up his instrument there and we began to work out from that old landmark. In a short while we found others—one a most interesting one. We came across an old charred pine stump about ten feet high. The original tree had undoubtedly died and forest fires had almost destroyed it; but Mr. Reynolds began to cut into this old stump and finally found unmistakable markings, long since over-grown, that showed that he was on the right track. From that old corner, more than a mile from my property, we were enabled, by reading the markings of 120 years ago, with absolute accuracy to locate other established corners and well-nigh obliterated bench marks. Before the day was done, we had found and reestablished long forgotten corner posts and lines, clearly defining the dividing lines and boundaries of our several properties—thus avoiding misunderstanding and confusion in the future.

"Remove not the ancient landmarks which thy fathers have set."

The next day we went back to this old corner and put up a permanent pile of stones—thus reestablishing the old landmarks of six generations ago.

What tremendous changes have taken place since the establishment of that old land corner, when the original survey was made in 1806. Rabun County was then nearly a week's journey by the then prevailing modes of travel from the spot where Atlanta now stands. Then such a trip would have involved many hardships, much discomfort, and some real danger. Unfriendly Indians roamed those hills, and a lawless element that had drifted down along the Blue Ridge mountains from Virginia and North Carolina were given to pillage and plunder. Then communication with the outside world was uncertain and irregular.

To-day, I can drive from my office in Atlanta to my home in Rabun County in about three hours. To-day, I can have my breakfast in Atlanta, drive to Lakemont and transact important business and return to Atlanta in time for dinner. Or, in other words, between suns I can accomplish what

would have taken my grandfather practically two weeks to have done, and without discomfort or undue risks.

I can pick up my 'phone and talk with my farm superintendent up there in the hills of Rabun, or transact business with my broker in New York, or talk with a banker in London, almost with equal ease. There is scarcely a day that I do not talk to someone in New York, consummate important business deals with as much facility as I could if the person to whom I was talking sat at my desk in the Candler Building in Atlanta.

Great hydroelectric plants, nestling in the canyons of those mountains up there, driven by the terrific force of the mountain torrents that have been running uselessly for centuries, serve to generate an unseen power that is conveyed through a copper wire no larger than this pencil to Atlanta, 120 miles away, and other nearby cities, that turns the wheels of her great factories, lights her streets and buildings, and furnishes transportation for nearly three hundred thousand people daily. Or, in other words, the harnessing of the rivers of North Georgia has completely revolutionized the mode of living of more than a million people. Yet that old landmark that we discovered and reestablished that morning—the handiwork of a surveyor 120 years ago—is just as accurate a marker to-day as it was the day it was erected.

How important it is that we remove not the ancient landmarks which our fathers set up! I sit in my library up there on Sunday morning and listen to a sermon. The preacher may be speaking from a pulpit in Atlanta or from the platform of some great metropolitan church in New York, Pittsburgh, or Chicago; but through the medium of a little instrument sitting on the table by my side, I hear every word distinctly and as quickly as uttered. What an astounding change from the days of the Pony Express or the Circuit Rider on horseback; but the message is fundamentally the same.

The old landmarks stand—IMMUTABLE, UNCHANGEABLE.

There is to-day a restless impatience with the thoughts and ideals of the past, which no serious-minded and thoughtful person can overlook. The automobile, the telephone, the aeroplane, and the radio have revolutionized and reconstructed

the social and economic life of our day. The plodding way of our fathers is to us to-day the dull, impossible day of a scientifically unenlightened age. Nobody rises for the defense of the methods of a generation ago, because we all know that we have lived beyond their adaptation. You cannot force the present economic conditions into such a crude and rigid mold, nor can you compel social life to accept standards which lack the drive and the thrust of the great days in which we find ourselves. These facts have been responsible for the development of new conditions for the religious life and is an entirely altered situation for the Christian church. The whole current of our religious life has been changed to fit the new order of things. Religious thinking has undergone a very definite revision, and the whole method of Church work has been turned inside out. It is not that we have been swept off our feet by the materialistic phases of progress, but that religion must keep pace with the age to which it speaks. It is unnatural and impossible for the same person to observe the social and business standards of the twentieth century and bend slavishly to the religious standards of the nineteenth century.

It is just here that we face our gravest danger in this new and revolutionary age. Our first impulse is to put overboard the whole religious life and methods of a generation ago; but in that disposition we are outrunning the facts in material progress, and we are sometimes altogether too prone to ignore the ancient landmarks which our fathers have set up for us. Twentieth century enterprise has in no sense broken with the past; it has simply surged forward in an almost miraculous degree. Take, for instance, the automobile. It was not originated by the Twentieth Century. The wheel and axle have been in process of evolution since the days of the ox cart in the wilderness, and its motor is but the latest phase of the vision of James Watts as he sat in his mother's kitchen and listened to the tattoo of the lid of the teakettle. The propeller of the great ocean liner is but the ultimate development of the crude paddle with which the savage drove his rude birch-bark canoe over the waters of this country, even before the advent of the white man. It is the recognition and retention of these vital factors which have made economic

progress possible. In just exactly the same way, there are certain factors of life and certain values, established through history, which we cannot afford to cast off.

"Thou shalt not steal" is just as great a law to-day as it was 2,000 years ago, and the Ten Commandments are as abiding and eternal as God himself. "Remove not the ancient landmarks which thy fathers have set." You may well ask what are these old landmarks that we are to be guided by in this new environment and in this modern life in which we are living.

Here is the greatest of all—the great Beacon Light of Civilization that has sent out its rays of hope and of life to millions of souls who were groping in darkness and doubt and unbelief. "O," you say, "that is old stuff; we have outgrown that." Now, have you?

Some of us think pretty well of Mr. Thomas Jefferson. He has sometimes been called the Father of the Constitution. Here is what he has to say: "I have always said, and I always will say, that the studious perusal of the Sacred Book will make better citizens, better fathers, and better husbands." And I have a notion that these three personalities are sadly needed to-day.

That great philosopher, Benjamin Franklin, uttered these wise words: "A Bible and a newspaper in every home, a good school in every district, all studied and appreciated as they merit, are the principal support of virtue, morality, and civil liberty."

Daniel Webster made it a practice to read the Bible through every year, and once said: "I pity the man who cannot find in it a rich supply of thought and rules of conduct."

The eloquent and learned Edward Everett once said: "All the distinctive features and superiority of our public institutions are derived from the teaching of the Scriptures."

William H. Seward, great in law and statesmanship, said: "The whole hope of human progress is suspended on the ever-growing influence of the Bible."

I have nothing but contempt for the so-called scientist who prattles away out of an empty head, and an emptier heart, and says that the Bible is an obsolete book and has no bearing on the problems of modern civilization. We may have de-

parted from its teachings, but our marvelous progress of the past 100 years has not changed one divine principle laid down in this old Book. That was the foundation stone and the inspiration of the greatest document ever conceived by finite minds—the Constitution of the United States.

This spirit of unrest characterizes our age. Theories are reversed over-night. Dogmas are cast aside with the carelessness one would manifest in discarding an old garment. The discovery of America by Columbus is no longer an accepted tenet. The authenticity of Shakespeare is even questioned. The character of that great soldier, citizen, and statesman, George Washington, has been bitterly assailed by some publicity-seeking individuals, and the proverbial certainty of two and two making four is no longer accepted without some mental reservation or explanatory conjunction. I expect almost any time to hear some little two-by-four pedagogue, who has a few letters behind his name, jump up and say "that two and two make four is true only because we have accepted it as such."

You young ladies are going out from the sacred walls of this old College—some to enter business, some to enter professions, but most of you, I hope, to take up that greatest of all occupations, home-building and the sacred office of motherhood.

You must teach your children that if our civilization is to stand, there are things that never change. The Creator, by whatever name he may be called, is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. The operation of natural law rewards or punishes with the same exactness as it did when Moses sinned in the wilderness.

Love is another of the eternal verities that changeth not. Its light will illumine the human mind and its radiance will warm the human heart when we are in darkness and the chill of death is upon us. Parents should teach their children that human history is a chain; that this generation is a link connecting the civilization of yesterday with that of to-morrow; that it is as unwise to reject a truth because it is old as it is to refuse one because it is new. Life is a building, and when you destroy the foundation upon which our Christian civilization has been builded you wreck the entire edifice.

But it is not my purpose to preach to you; but, rather, to talk to you in the plain, frank manner of a business man who has had much to do with the college boys and girls of the past decade. Let us get back to some of the corner posts from which we are to shape our course in everyday life. We will go over here on the hillside, and there we find the Cross of Calvary, and we lay down the eternal corner stone of

REVERENCE FOR RELIGION

Irreverence, while alarmingly prevalent amongst the youth of our country to-day, is in no sense a modern evil. Irreverence is as ancient as Cain, as vulgar as Esau, and as profane as Hophni and Phinehas; but whether in ancient or modern times, it in the end works the same direful result. It is not possible to hold religion in disrespect without damage to society and danger to civil government.

Both social and political life take their color in great measure from the religion of the people; and when religion is despised and its sacred institutions neglected, all the best things in civilization wither and die.

It has been always the office of religion to found and sustain commonwealths. Even the skeptical Rousseau said: "Never was a State founded that did not have religion as its basis." And the great English statesman, Edmund Burke, affirmed: "We know that religion is the basis of civil society and the fruitful source of all blessing and comfort in human intercourse."

These famous men have not overstated the indispensable value of religion to social order and political well being. And, if they have spoken truly, irreverence with respect to religion is in essence almost treason with respect to government. It is especially true that republics cannot exist without religion to nourish the life of their citizens.

We do well to lay to heart in these days of irreverence and impurity the words of Washington, the father of our country, which are found in his Farewell Address:

"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism who

should labor to subvert these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public felicity. Let it be simply asked: 'Where is the security for prosperity, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice?' And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious liberty."

Religion is the corner stone of our American Republic, and the Bible was held by Chancellor Kent to be a part of the common law of America. Our nation was a nation founded in faith; and if it ever perishes (which God forbid), it will fall for want of faith in God and the Bible.

Now we come down into the valley, and we find the second great corner stone of life—

RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY

Scarcely less important than religion itself, and inseparably bound up with religion, is respect for authority. There can be no government and no order where there is no authority. Lack of respect for authority is born of revolutionary self-assertion, and culminates at last in anarchy.

About us are many evidences of decay in respect for authority. The authority of the home is set at naught, the sanctity of law is despised, and the rule of government is held in greater or less contempt by large numbers of people. We hear now of a "revolt of youth." But against whom can youth revolt, except against its own parents? And what sort of revolt is it that violates the commandment to "honor thy father and thy mother" and rushes forth into life with the blind and boastful confidence of inexperience?

Of course, if the present generation of youth may revolt against the authority of parents, the generation following it

will in turn revolt. Shall we have from the present day to the day of judgment a series of youthful insurrections against all that has gone before?

It is a matter of most serious import that revolt against authority in the home breeds disorder and revolution in the church and State, and this danger of revolution is the peculiar peril which besets the home, the church, and the State in our day. It is not a matter of little importance to be lightly considered. We must have a return to reverence for religion and respect for authority, or all of the noblest and most sacred things in life will be overthrown and the holiest institutions of society will be pulled down.

From this mountain top we see our final and fundamental corner stone—

LOVE OF COUNTRY

"O," you say, "that's easy!" Yes, it is easy to throw our hats in the air and yell ourselves hoarse when the band marches down the street with flags flying and we see those boys in our country's uniform, alert, straight-backed, their faces glowing with pride. We saw them as they marched away in 1917, at the call of that great idealist and statesman, Woodrow Wilson. Then we began to realize what love of country meant. I shall never forget one spring morning when that curly-headed, blue-eyed boy of mine, impelled by a patriotic desire to serve his country, left college and came to my office with a carefully rehearsed speech by which to sell me the idea that he wanted to enlist and go overseas. I am quite sure that that morning my love for my own overtopped my love of country.

What notable words were those uttered by Mr. Wilson before the House of Congress on April 2, 1917, when he said: "There is one choice we cannot make, we are incapable of making. We will not choose the path of submission and suffer the most sacred rights of our nation and our people to be ignored or violated. The wrongs against which we now array ourselves are no common wrongs. Our object is to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world, as against selfish and autocratic power, and to set up amongst the really free and self-governed peoples of the

world such a concert of purpose and of action as will henceforth insure the observance of these principles." The heart of a great nation responded almost as one man, and poured out its life and treasure in the support of a divine principle.

More than 56,000 of our boys poured out their blood on French soil in defense of this great purpose. The American people not only gave of their flesh and blood, but nearly twenty billions of dollars without hope of reward other than that of fighting for a principle. Yet most of us do not love our country well enough to obey its plain and simple laws. We are a peculiar people. Many of us, because we do not agree with the requirements of the Eighteenth Amendment, persist in violating the prohibition law and think that we are good citizens, think that we love our country, and look with scorn and contempt upon the common thief that burglarizes a store or lifts a purse from the pocket of some unsuspecting individual. I suspect that most of us here to-day have been guilty of the violation of motor speed laws because we are unwilling to suffer even temporary inconvenience to ourselves, even though we claim to be good, law-abiding citizens.

We do not love it even well enough to sacrifice some of our simplest pleasures for it without grumbling. We do not even vote, and then bad men get into office, put there by an insignificant minority because the right-thinking people, who always in the majority, take no interest in civic, State, or National government beyond that of criticising those who have been elected to office through our suffrage. We need a great civic awakening, where the aroused conscience of the people will manifest itself in the elimination of inefficient, and often vicious, men from positions of power and influence and putting into office men and women who, under the fear of God, will look upon public office as a sacred trust.

It is a conspicuous fault of the present generation of men and women that they vainly imagine that they can do nothing toward evidencing their love of country without a lot of vulgar noise and senseless publicity. There has been published in recent years a popular and well-written set of books entitled "Makers of History," in which such names as those of Alexander, Cæsar, Hannibal, Napoleon, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln appear. But these men were not

the real makers of history. Mothers make more history than militarists, and the great common people do more to advance civilization than do those who occupy places of honor in Legislatures, the Congress, and the Senate. They toil and die while working at the very foundations of society. The common people heard our Lord gladly, and he spoke to them and cared for them with equal gladness. He knew their worth and valued their work.

It was Susanna Wesley, a home-making, home-loving mother, who toiled in obscurity, but who gave John and Charles Wesley to the world. Behind every great personality that has illumined the pages of history, if you will search carefully, you will likely find the influence of some devoted mother. It was a poor peasant mother who gave to the world the Babe born in Bethlehem, and when He died He was buried in a borrowed tomb.

Not from conspicuous corners in crowded streets has come, or will come, the great, vital influences on our lives; but when the great book of life is opened, the simple, brave, sweet services of the King's unknown soldiers, of the devoted mothers of men who have toiled in obscurity, and even suffered in poverty, will then be gloriously honored by Him who seeth in secret, and angelic forms will walk gladly in the train which does reverence to their heroic lives.

